

# NANTAHALA BYWAY

The Nantahala Byway's southern terminus is in the Cherokee County town of Marble, founded in 1911 and so named because it is near the state's largest marble deposit. This marble, in addition to other mineral resources found in this area, is of such high quality that it was used extensively at Arlington National Cemetery. **From**

**Marble, leave town and take U.S.**

**19/74/129 east** through eight miles of farming valley to Andrews. The valley has rich soil, which was deposited by the Valley River that flows on the valley's eastern side toward the Hiawasee River in Murphy.

**In Andrews, turn right onto U.S. 19 Business** and drive through this early 20th century mountain town that is named for Alexander Boyd Andrews, who founded the Western North Carolina Railroad. **The byway rejoins U.S. 19/74/129 north of town where the road becomes two lanes.**

From Andrews, **travel seven miles to the community of Topton.** The Indian Lakes Scenic Byway (pg. 26) intersects at this point and runs north on U.S. 129. **For the next 20 miles, the byway passes through the Nantahala Gorge** by first crossing the Nantahala River. At the Clay/Macon County line, look for the 360-foot Camp Branch Falls just before entering

the community of Nantahala, founded in 1882. This is where the gorge's true nature begins. Notice that the U.S. Forest

Service's Mountain Waters Scenic Byway merges with this byway just prior to Nantahala.

The Nantahala Gorge was called the "Land of the Midday Sun." From this phrase, the Cherokee Indians

derived the name *Nantahala* because of its depth and steep walls. It is a world-class whitewater rafting location. During the warmer months, many rafting companies provide tours, while kayaking and canoeing enthusiasts enjoy the river well into the winter. Occasionally, slalom gates are visible for races held on the river. For those who prefer a less energetic ride, the main boat drop point near the southern end of the gorge provides the calmest water.

The byway occasionally provides glimpses of the Great Smoky Mountain Railroad, which snakes through the gorge paralleling U.S. 19/74. The railroad offers visitors a different perspective of the gorge. The railroad operates daily from 9 a.m. until 2 p.m., and reservations are recommended.

**Continue traveling seven miles through the gorge to the community of Wesser,** named for a hunter who lived here. At Wesser, the Nantahala River no



Whitewater Rafting on Nantahala River